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THE ORCHARD PAVILION

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ORCHARD PAVILION

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

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μᾶλα παρὰ προθύροισι τεθάλοτα
δώματος οὐ μεγάλω
φίλων δ' ἔσω γλύκεια λέσχη . . .

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PREFACE

SOME eminent philosopher, speaking or writing lately about the war, said that it had already produced an almost refreshing sense of seriousness. It is certainly serious enough, but I cannot yet admit the sense of refreshment. Indeed with all due respect I would submit—and I believe that I here speak for many persons beside myself—that I have never lived through any period in the whole course of my life so sadly or anxiously, through days that dragged so slowly, with so heavy a preoccupation for ever in the background, and with thoughts so tethered to one melancholy track of thought. The outlook indeed of an elderly non-combatant, who is useless from the military point of view, and indeed has only practised the arts and accomplishments of peace, who thinks that

war makes havoc of men's happiness without even settling their differences, who mournfully sees an ever-increasing number of friends and pupils going off gallantly to face the worst risks, and who realises too that the old easy civilisation of Europe is being weighed in the balances—such an outlook, I think, can hardly be an enlivening one!

Yet I do not deny that there have been gleams of light and consolation—the sense that England has acted honourably and disinterestedly, the heroic and ardent conduct of our forces, the sight of a great nation so firmly united in a noble cause, the entire absence of any tendency, even on the part of those who have suffered most, to criticise or grumble or bemoan their fate—this has all been deeply inspiring, and has given a new fervour and significance to life.

But it may be said that at present we have had to bear less than our share of sacrifice and humiliation, that our ways of life are little demoralised, that the pain of loss and bereavement and devastation has been felt far more

heavily by other nations. It is true. Yet I am not sure that the pressure of anxiety and anticipation is not the most wearing pain of all. In my own private sorrows and tragedies hitherto this has always been so. The mind, as Horace said, *ducit opes animumque ferro*, draws resource and courage from the stroke. I remember how Sir Walter Scott in his Diary declared that when the heavy blow of bankruptcy fell upon him in the full tide of his prosperity, he was astonished to find how little it hurt him, and that enduring it and meeting it was infinitely less unmanning than expecting and dreading it. And in the case of some of our Belgian guests—who in losing everything have won a fame which as Job says "cannot be gotten for gold"—I have seen and heard with astonishment and admiration how tranquilly and gently they bear their troubles, and with what touching sweetness they set themselves to live the life and join in the interests of a strange land. I wish I could think that I should bear such grief with so beautiful a sincerity and patience!

But for all that the times of refreshment are as yet far off, and one of the sharpest trials of these portentous days is the sense of uselessness and futility which falls upon anyone who has valued and used peace, and whose only function now seems to be to help to contribute to the expenses of war, out of resources which the war seems likely to sweep away. And yet such is the spirit of the race to which I am proud to belong, that never for an instant have we desired that we had done otherwise or regretted the choice we have made. If the great spectre of coarse tyranny and brutal aggression can be laid, there is no sacrifice that we would not gladly and eagerly make.

This little book was designed and executed in days which seem divided by a deep trench of tragic experience from the days in which we are living. It is not written in the key which I should now choose, but it is still, I believe, substantially true, and I could not and would not write it otherwise. Moreover it was all printed and completed before the

storm-cloud had appeared on the horizon, and though I have long delayed to publish it, I see no reason why it should not appear; because I do not think that it is wise or useful to confine the thought unintermittently to one dark chamber of preoccupation—we grow morbid so—and I have myself felt very grateful to any companionship or talk or book or work which could for a little divert my thoughts from their anxious narrow track. We may thankfully believe, too, that man's business is after all the business of peace, and that the great cruel profitless business of war, binding its burden so heavily on the weak and innocent, claiming such useless and unrewarding toil from workers who can gain nothing from the conflict, whatever its issue may be, must by the very nature of things be but an interruption to the normal course of the world, for the simple reason that man must live and earn his livelihood, while war is a pure waste both of life and sustenance.

And therefore I think that the little book, which is serious enough for all its peaceful

setting, had better tell its tale and say its say. For there are few minds that are even capable of grappling with, and still less of co-ordinating, the frightful and ominous problems which this great catastrophe arouses while there are many minds that are sorely perplexed and bewildered by all the confusion and suffering which the ruthless policy and selfish ambition of a deeply deluded and misled nation can inflict on innumerable homes and lives. The wisest and noblest spirits of the time must trace, if they can, the causes of the evil, and explain, if they dare, what wholesome or hopeful meaning it can possibly hold for humanity. Those who cannot do that may yet try to remind the distressed and bewildered that in spite of this vast convulsion of violence, and behind it, there yet remain the beautiful and hopeful and peaceful elements of life; that friendship and natural joy and leisure and health and art and the delights of life are not destroyed by war and tumult, even if they be for a time eclipsed and shadowed; and indeed that one of the

issues of all this misery, and perhaps the best issue, may be that the nations will set their hearts more firmly and unselfishly on the worthiest kind of peace, and value it more deeply for all the anguish of the strife; may make men resolve to eliminate from the peace they had so long and so carelessly enjoyed the baser and uglier elements of greed and mistrust and envy and hatred, which have made so fierce and heartrending a tragedy possible.

Though the spirit ache to contemplate it, we have our duty to do and our chosen task to perform! We must not and we cannot forget that! But in the sternest and most unflinching prosecution of it, we may not dare to forget that we shall only, if we succeed, have stemmed the flood of oppression; we have got to make a better and a truer kind of life possible hereafter. It is not to be thought of that Europe shall henceforward be only a land of camps and fortresses. That would be the bitterest outcome of all. But if on the other hand we can learn a

mutual confidence, a wiser tolerance, a more active goodwill, a deeper sense of the unity of human life and human aims, then we may win our way to a peace such as the world has never before dared to dream of.

A. C. B.

MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.
November 1914.

The Orchard Pavilion

PART I

I

It was the pavilion which had first attracted Roderick Armitage to the place; he had caught a sight of its slender stone chimney, with the queer pierced ornament at the top, above the flowering apple-trees. Roderick had a pleasant taste for the style and aspect of houses, and saw beauties of proportion and material where many people could see none. It was in one of his undergraduate vacations, and he was rambling about the Cotswolds alone—

that was one of his fancies. The farm —Sunset was its charming name—to which the pavilion belonged, stood at the end of the village of Helmdon, one of those bare and beautiful little hamlets of stone houses, set at every possible angle on the banks of a full clear stream of water, that ran brimming under low stone bridges, and beneath the terrace-walls of little gardens full of gay flowers, and red-clustered shrubs, dripped over by soft pads of white and purple aubrietia, and trailing toadflax. The valley itself was cold of aspect, with its spare green pastures and stone-piled walls, as it folded in among the hills; but there was a rich far-off view of blue tree-dotted plains and faint wolds. Higher up stood Sunset Farm, a substantial house of rich orange stone,

among solid barns and granaries, roofed with heavy stone-tiles, and surrounded by elms and sycamores. Roderick had walked in, as was his easy custom, to ask if he might look at the pavilion; and when he saw it from the farm-garden, he was enchanted by it; it was built on low-crowned arches, and the little space beneath it was crowded with farm-litter, hurdles, posts, and a turnip-chopping machine; the upper part of it seemed to consist of one big room with pedimented windows, all very rococo and fanciful. He could not conceive how the dainty little building had come there. The old good-natured farmer, Mr. Hickes, had come up, and had told him that it was the only part intact of a great house which had once stood there; and of which

the farm itself was a mutilated portion. There had been another similar pavilion, further down the orchard, which had become ruinous, and had been taken down, he recollected, when he was a small boy. Mr. Hickes had pointed out to him the old lines of grass-grown terraces which had formed the garden; he took him into the house, and showed him the big fireplaces, the heavy ceilings of fine plaster-work, the bits of oak panelling—then he had taken him to the pavilion; there was a little stairway which led down from the upper chamber into the orchard. But the room into which he presently brought Roderick, which formed the whole interior of the pavilion, was amazingly delightful. It had a coved ceiling of plaster, with some traces of

colouring still lingering on the clumsy moulded grape-vine with which it was ornamented. The walls had been frescoed, and though much of the paint had peeled off, there were dim forms of heroes and nymphs still visible. There was a solid oak table in the room, and some wooden chairs. It all seemed in good enough repair, and the antique dim glass was still in the windows. The place took Roderick's fancy very strangely; and as he was going on his way, the farmer offered him a glass of cider, which he gladly accepted, and they talked a little. He told the old man that he was an Oxford undergraduate, and Mr. Hickes said rather shyly that he supposed he did not know of any young gentlemen who might like lodgings in the summer—the house

was a big one, and they were glad to take in as many as three lodgers, if they could put up with simple food. Roderick at once struck a bargain; he and two of his friends would, he was sure, like to come there later in the summer. He was shown some pleasant bare clean bedrooms—and the farmer went on to say that if they liked to have the use of the pavilion to sit in, he would have it swept out, and some chairs put there—it was a nice cool place in the summer heat. He was introduced to the farmer's wife, a pleasant bustling woman a good deal younger than her husband. That was the simple prelude to a charming adventure.

II

They arrived there in a hot July. Roderick had found his friends only too ready to accompany him. They had done a similar thing a year before, but then they had been uncomfortable enough in a frowsy village inn. Mr. Hickes met them at the little wayside station four miles away. They had piled up his cart with their luggage, and had bicycled up. It was a time of hot clear still weather. His two friends were Harry Knollys and Fred Norman. The three had been at Charterhouse together, and the old alliance at school had been kept up at the University. Roderick himself was

the only son of his parents. His father had been a doctor, but had died ten years before. His mother, a sweet-tempered, rather helpless woman, had been left well off, and Roderick had a single sister, an active cheerful girl. They lived in a quiet Hampshire village, but Roderick's home did not mean much to him. He was allowed to do very much as he liked, his mother placidly assenting to any plans that he chose to make. He had been hitherto quite unable to decide on a profession, and he was bursting with ideas and experiments. He read, he wrote, he tried his hand at drawing, he played tolerably on a piano. He had no academical ambitions, and thought meanly of exact knowledge. He proposed to educate himself on his own

lines, but it was a fitful process; much of his time was spent in eager talk, and much in vague and delightful reflection; he was often inclined to think his own company the best in the world, though he cultivated easy and pleasant relations with all sorts of men; he was popular and easy-going, entertained a good deal in a simple way, and was apt to form sudden and not very lasting friendships with people whom, for the time being, he idealised. But he had a tough critical intelligence, and judged people both tolerantly and incisively. He had a great disgust both for stupidity and sensuality, disliked alcohol and tobacco, and found all women unintelligible and even tiresome; he had no religion, but much enthusiasm.

Harry Knollys was a very different type; he was a big quiet creature, who rowed in the boat, and went in for athletics. He was handsome and strong, with brown curling hair and grey eyes, very imperturbable, and extremely sensible and kindly. There was no one whose opinion was more deferred to in the College, because he always said very simply, but without any provocativeness, what he thought. He was a man of whom it was natural to ask a favour, and he was thoroughly and consistently obliging. He found something to like in most men, and never censured or disapproved—and indeed there was little reason for him to do so, because men tended to behave soberly and reasonably in his presence. His father was a clergyman, and he

himself intended to become one in due course. He was looked upon by the dons as one of the very best and soundest men in the College. He was not at all brilliant, but he had a good head and a sound judgment.

The third friend, Fred Norman, was the least popular; he had some Scotch blood in him, and his manner was dry and rather uncompromising. His father was a poor and unsuccessful solicitor, and there were several children. Fred Norman had very little money, and made it go a long way. He worked too hard, and seldom left his rooms for the sake of company. He was a fair athlete; but he had no geniality, and very little small-talk. He was suspected of being rather superior; he was thought well of by

the dons, but repelled their advances, and had no use for them, except in a professional capacity. He had been known to say that he wished they would stick to business, and not bother. But he had a real affection for Roderick, whom he treated as a pleasant child. He intended to go to the Bar, if it could be managed; and he heartily disliked his slovenly home, with a cross mother, an overworked father, and some rather grim brothers and sisters.

III

They had a delicious month at the farm. Norman worked grimly, Knollys conscientiously, and Roderick alternately studied the history of Italian painting, to illustrate which he had brought down a mass of cheap photographs, or, if the atmosphere of toil was oppressive, he pursued what he called his agricultural studies, which consisted in accompanying Mr. Hickes about the farm, and getting him to tell old rustic stories. The other two treated his Italian pictures with an amused indulgence. "I can't really feel," said Norman, holding up a photograph of a Botticelli Madonna by the

corner, "that it could ever have been worth anyone's while to spend time over a thing like this! It's not *like* anything; and when it was done, the painter can only have been disgusted with it." "It was their religion that made them do it," said Knollys, "you can see that the people who did those things really believed in religion." "You are both of you utterly and entirely wrong," said Roderick. "It was worth while, because they wanted to make something beautiful—making beautiful things is the only thing which *is* worth while—and it was not religion at all. They did not believe in religion as you believe in it, Harry! It's a social force, isn't it? or something quite as dull? They took it all for granted, of course, but not as a useful

thing—just as a thing which was inconceivably grand and beautiful. It had nothing to do with being good at all. They just painted their wives and children, or their mistresses for the matter of that; and it was the only direction in which their imagination could move. It's like the verse in the *Blessed Damosel!*"

He quoted with unction:

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him, round whom all souls
Kneel,—the unnumbered solemn heads
Bow'd with their aureoles:
And Angels, meeting us, shall sing
To their citherns and citoles."

"What extraordinary stuff you do get hold of, Roderick!" said Norman, in an agony of commonsense. "That seems to me unmitigated twaddle:

'To their citherns and citoles,' indeed!"

"It's the most beautiful poem ever written by a man of nineteen," said Roderick.

"Yes, I daresay it is!" said Norman, "that's not saying much!"

"Fred, you are absolutely hopeless!" said Roderick, "you can't distinguish between the books which can be read, and the books which must be written about."

"I quite agree," said Norman, "that it is just as inconceivable that human beings should have thought it worth while to have written most of the Classics. But I don't care a damn about that! It's my business to know them."

"This is pathetic!" said Roderick.

"Haven't you got further than that? Books are not *about* things, nor are there pictures *of* things. They simply *are* things: they are art—they are symbols."

"I haven't any idea what you are talking about," said Norman, with the dignity of ignorance. "This Thucydides—it's an account of the Peloponnesian War."

Roderick groaned. "No, it isn't that!" he said, "it's an epic—I've read very little of it, but enough to know it is an epic."

"Aren't you confusing it with Homer?" said Knollys.

"Great and merciful God!" said Roderick, "you two chaps are in nether darkness! You sit reading half the day, and you don't know what you are

doing or where you are going. Let me expound the holy mysteries of Art. I feel like a priest in the shrine, interrupted by the chatter of jackdaws!"

"Come, shut you up!" said Norman, "this isn't business—get out to your agricultural studies, or hold your jaw!"

"I see what you mean, in a way," said Knollys, politely, "but I don't agree with you. You shall get it all off your chest sometime. Mind you, I don't think these pictures nonsense at all. I think them rather good in their place."

"Yes, you think Art is the handmaid of religion," said Roderick, "you don't even know that religion is an art too, and a rather debased kind of art—that part of it which isn't magic!"

Knollys smiled. "That's very unpractical," he said; "but look here, I'm going to finish this chapter before I have lunch, so you had better stow it. This isn't the sort of talk for the morning, you know, and if it goes on, you will be chucked out of the boat!" He seized Roderick by the arms and propelled him to the staircase. "Run away and play," he said. "That's all you're good for!"

Roderick made an insulting gesture, and fled. "He's a mere child!" said Norman. "It's a mercy for him he has got some money." "I'm afraid he'll never settle down to anything," said Knollys, "and yet he's clever enough in his way!"

The two, left alone, resumed their work, while the sun streaming in

touched the faded frescoes with soft gold, and made the curly head and fine features of Knollys into the face of an angel; but that did not occur to either him or Norman. They were both comfortable and healthy, and if they were not interested in their work, they both took a sort of businesslike pride in doing it.

IV

"Poor infants!" said Roderick, to himself, thinking how delicious the old house, with the big trees behind it, looked through the apple-trees, laden with waxen globes that were just beginning to blush on the southern side. "All on one side!" he thought to himself, "that's just perfect—why did I never think of that before?" He began to murmur verses to himself:

> "The sun-kissed orchard, all one way
> Blushed ripening in the steady noon."

"I'll work that out sometime," he thought. When he found the farmer,

he was delighted to see that his cheeks were like the apples too, ripened by the sun and air to a delicate flush. "I declare, Mr. Hickes," he said, "your cheeks are just like apples."

The old man smiled, and put up his hand to his face. "That's the air," he said, "that does that—they might be like a worser thing—but your cheeks, Mr. Roderick, they're more like peaches. You keep them like that, and you won't repent it! I like a boy to look like a peach — then you know he's going straight!"

"Mr. Hickes, you are a poet!" said Roderick. Mr. Hickes smiled, not ill-pleased. He felt a real affection for the boy, and liked his company. "You're a one to talk!" he said, shaking his head.

"Now we'll go and find some eggs for lunch," said Roderick. "Your eggs are heavenly! I wonder how you would like the eggs we get from the kitchen at Oxford—they taste stuffy, you know." "Stuffy, do they now," said Mr. Hickes; "that's a dreadful thing in an egg, to be sure! They shouldn't do that, as a matter of liking." "We are all rather stuffy at Oxford," said Roderick. "You three ain't the stuffy ones, then!" said Mr. Hickes. "Mrs. Hickes says she never saw three fresher young gentlemen; it's a pleasure to her that her linen should be lain in by such, she says—and she's a woman of her word, is Mrs. Hickes." "I really must write all this down," said Roderick. "What's that, sir?"

said Mr. Hickes. "Why, what you and Mrs. Hickes say," said Roderick. "Nay, nay!" said Mr. Hickes, "it ain't for that—it just comes to the tongue so."

He stood in his serviceable brown suit and leggings, feeling with his stick behind some piled-up wood. "I see the black pullet about here pretty constant—there ought to be some eggs in here." "Oh, let me look," said Roderick. "Yes, my word, here they are right enough—one, two, three—now then for three more! I declare I think that finding eggs is the best fun in the whole world!" "Yes, if you can lay your hand on them," said Mr. Hickes; "that's a nice brown one there—they seem to eat creamier, the brown

ones—it's a fancy I have!" "It looks as if she must have been drinking coffee," said Roderick. Mr. Hickes laughed loud. "Nay," he said, "it's the soil is that; the black pullet—she doesn't trouble the coffee much."

V

The three had many talks, both at meals, on walks, on bicycle rides, or best of all late at night, smoking in the pavilion. These talks as a rule followed the same sort of line, Roderick airing any sense or nonsense that came into his head, Norman objecting and retorting with much apparent but no real contempt, Knollys conscientiously and genuinely attempting to be fair to both points of view. It was a very good atmosphere for Roderick to appear at his liveliest. "The best of Fred," he once said to Knollys, "is that there is never any mistake about his liking you." "But what about me?" Knollys had said. "Oh, you—" said Roderick,

smiling vaguely, "you always make the best of everybody—charity never faileth, you know! I represent Faith and Hope!" "But what does Fred represent?" said Knollys. "Why, Commonsense," said Roderick.

As a matter of fact Norman was deeply devoted to Roderick, and though he was extremely frank to him, he never allowed him to be criticised, even by Knollys. "Roderick is like a little butterfly," said Knollys one morning to Norman, when Roderick had dashed out. "He can't be serious for a moment." "I don't know about that!" said Norman. "I think he's quite as serious as I want. He talks nonsense, of course; but it's good nonsense; he's never stupid, and he's never mean—he stirs you up somehow;

he's like the soda in the whisky; not alcoholic, but like pins in your throat and inside!"

Roderick in fact possessed the subtle thing called charm; he was not profound or logical or clear-headed; he could not conduct an argument, but he saw things in quick flashes—and he had that indefinable gracefulness of face, action, manner, look, and voice which makes people aware of a person's presence, anxious to please him, desirous to see and hear him, dull when he goes, cheerful when he returns. Roderick never talked in the same way to different people; he always established a relation, and paid his companions the subtle compliment of recognising their distinct qualities, remembering what they said, knowing their

preferences and prejudices; and he had too the magnetism which made the touch of his hand on a shoulder or arm into a sort of little caress. He and Norman had been walking one morning in the sunshine after breakfast in the little garden, and he had said to Norman that he was thinking of going away for a couple of nights to some friends in the neighbourhood. "Oh, not now!" said Norman, "when we go away, if you like—look here, I mean that—I like your being here!" Roderick looked at him for a moment, and then bent down to a violet-bed that grew beside the path. "What huge violets these are!" he said, in a moment, taking hold of one. "I really almost thought they were pansies!"

A minute later he said to Norman:

"I nearly made a mistake just now. I very nearly picked a violet and gave it you, when you said that. It would have expressed what I meant; but you wouldn't have liked it, because you hate sentiment. You would not have known what to do with it. You would have twirled it in your hand, and dropped it when I wasn't looking." "Try and see!" said Norman. "Oh, no!" said Roderick, "I know better —besides, it wouldn't mean now at all what I felt then!" "Pearls before swine?" said Norman. "Well, no," said Roderick, "more like what they call in the advertisements, 'peach-fed Californian bacon.'"

On this particular evening—it was a hot still night, and a fitful scented breeze ran about the orchard and died

away again, while the sky was pierced with innumerable stars—they were sitting in the pavilion, lounging and gossiping. "What a nice night to make love on!" said Roderick suddenly. "I've never been in love myself, except when I was ten, with a friend of my mother's—there doesn't seem any time for it nowadays; but I can't help thinking it must be rather fun. Haven't either of you chaps ever been in love? No, of course you haven't, Fred—but I somehow suspect Harry of a demure affair in the background." He looked fixedly at Knollys, who shifted in his chair, got rather red, and coughed. Roderick imitated him. "Oh, that's it!" he said; "well, I will spare you now! I admit you can't tell before Fred, but I'll have it out of

you sometime." He looked smilingly at Knollys for a moment, and then said: "Look here, I feel very confidential to-night. Let's be confidential! Why shouldn't we say for once what we are really out for, we three—what we mean to do and be. I'll begin the performance, if you will both swear to go on." "Well, we'll hear you first!" said Norman, "and then we'll decide. Now then, off you go!"

"No, no!" said Roderick, "you will have to swear—uplifted hands, in the Scotch fashion—just an affirmation!" He lifted his hand, and Norman raised his, and a moment afterwards Knollys did the same.

"Now, no nonsense!" said Roderick. "We'll be serious—as serious as death for once. Let me think a minute,

and pray for honesty—crystal-clear honesty."

He sate meditating, while an owl, hidden in the elms, fluted softly, and was answered by another owl further up the valley. "There!" said Roderick, "that's an omen—just that—our native woodnotes wild! Here goes! Now, you are not to laugh, or be asinine, or shy, or stupid. I state unmistakably that I am going to worship beauty. I can't explain what it is, but I know it when I see it. It is all wrapped up in this, that you do things because you like them. Not what you happen to like at the moment, because that is piggish, nor what you think right, because that is priggish—but what you know to be beautiful. I'll give you an instance. I have a remark-

ably good appetite, and I like drink—not for drinky but for drunky—I like the sensation of power and brilliance that it gives me. But you may have observed that I never touch spirits, and drink water at lunch, and very often at dinner. If I ever do drink, it's for kindness. And why do I abstain?—because it is beautiful to abstain; and because people who drink become coarse and stupid, and I like having myself in hand. Drink has a power over me, and I don't like being interfered with.

"That's a preface! The principle, as Harry would say, runs through my life.

"Now, for the present, I want to look into everything which amuses or interests me. I have an idea that everyone who tries to do anything in

art is in the same case as myself—he has seen something beautiful, and wants to say so. I need not describe all my rich and varied accomplishments, but you may have noticed that I practise them for my own pleasure, and not to impress other people, though I can't help being impressive. It's a gift I have!

"Well, I don't care a damn about that! I want to be liked, because that is beautiful. I don't want to be admired, because that is ugly. I mean to go on looking round. I am going to read most books, to see what people are driving at; I am going to look at pictures, and see fine places, and listen to music, and discover delightful people. I am not going to touch business or politics with a pair of tongs; and I

don't care a hang about social reform. The only reform worth having is that people should wish to be beautiful, and many people don't know what it means, while some people are it without knowing it. I am not going to settle down at anything until I see what is worth doing, and then I shall do it with all my might. I don't want to be married, and I don't want not to be married. If I can find someone who is beautiful, and who wants the same things as I do, I might make a match of it. But I mean to live with people who can give me a sense of there being fine things about, and who can just neglect ordinary things; and why I go about with you two chaps is more than I can tell —excuse my candour! Then I don't want to be ill, I don't want to suffer,

I don't want to die—that's all very ugly—though I have a suspicion that if I am obliged to endure those indignities, there may be something rather splendid behind them—in fact I think that no one can do really splendid things, without having found a way out of beastly things. I suppose," he went on, " that that's all of it Hebrew to you two. Fred thinks it silly, and Harry thinks it wicked—he would call it hedonistic, if he knew what the word meant! I shall gratify my curiosity, but not because I want to do nasty things, but to find out what is nice—No, I *won't* be interrupted! Things are not always what they seem. But I won't have anything to do with what is dull, and I don't want to help or benefit anyone, or set a good example,

or influence anyone. I don't believe in that. The only thing you can do for people is to love them, if you can; and many people are detestable, and more are tiresome. The one fatal mistake is not to know what you like and why you like it. And so I come back to my creed, and say that I like things which are beautiful, and because they are beautiful, and for no other reason." He stopped and laughed and looked at his companions. "Now you know!" he said; adding, "and I suppose that why I like your company is that there are some elements of beauty about you two—sadly warped and blurred, of course—but a little basis—enough to go upon. Now, it's your turn, Harry—we will hear you first!"

They sate for a moment in silence, and Norman gave a laugh, and made as if he would have spoken. "Hush, hush!" said Roderick, "this is a solemn affair, a celebration of mysteries. Harry has to read the Epistle."

Knollys sate in his chair, with knitted brows. Then he said, rather shyly: "Well, I don't mind speaking out for once—but mind," he added, "I'm not very good at saying what I feel—and if I use rather stupid words, it's because I'm used to them. I don't want you two to think them affected, even if they sound so. . . . Of course," he went on, "I see that there's a lot in what Roderick says—I agree with a lot of it, though I shouldn't put it like that; but I believe—well, I believe in God, you know, and I believe in con-

science. That sounds very stiff; but I mean it. I mean by God a Power that put me here, and that wants certain things to be done. I don't know why He does not do them faster —but there is something about, which I know to be evil—I think it is what Roderick calls ugliness—nasty, filthy, selfish things. Now, I will be honest. I don't claim to be good, because I often do not do what I ought to do. I don't speak out when I know I ought, and I excuse it to myself by thinking that if I can get an influence over a man by not seeming priggish, I may be able to do something for him which I couldn't do if he thought me priggish. I don't think that's right, but one has to be roundabout. It's like this—you have to bicycle by a road, even if it

doesn't go straight to the place you want to get at. You can't ride your bike across ploughed fields and streams —you have got to make terms with people, though I should do it less if I was braver. But I see in the Gospel that Christ—I am a Christian—did not go in for finding fault with sinners, and I don't think He did it because he excused sin, but because He meant to save them, which He could not do unless they loved and trusted Him.

"As to conscience, I believe it is God telling me what I ought to do; and I want to do that; and I want other people to follow conscience, because I do not think they can be happy in any other way. And I am a Christian, because I believe that Christ was

God, and that He is still here in the world, working not by example and memory, but by power and life. I believe that He helps me when I pray, and I do pray; and then I am a Churchman, because I believe that the Church was a Society which Christ founded, and that He meant all the world to be drawn into it; and I am an Anglican, because though I see that we are probably wrong in some things, I believe we are less wrong than other Churches; because I think that the Romans have put things into the Gospel which are not there, and Dissenters take away things which are there.

"That's all very short and stupid, I am afraid," Knollys added, looking embarrassed; "but I don't often talk

about these things, and I don't talk easily about them—that's a fault of mine; but it's rather a relief to say them out for once. And what I mean to do is to work on those lines, and to try to induce other people to see the truth—and let me say that I think that Roderick sees a part of the truth, but only a part—that he is too much taken up with what seems to me to be pretty things—but things which have to be disregarded, if you are looking for what is right. I think you must seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first—and that books and pictures and so on are some of the things which may be added unto you—because I believe that beautiful things can help, and are one side of God's mind—but they can be a hindrance too."

Knollys sate blushing, ashamed of his earnestness.

"That's all right!" said Roderick, "full marks for that! I see what you are out for, though I don't agree. Now then, Fred!"

"Well, I won't refuse!" said Fred—"but you will neither of you like what I am going to say. I think that both of you know a damned sight too much about these things. I am an Agnostic, of course, and I don't believe that anyone can know as much about God as Harry does, or as you do, Roderick, for the matter of that, because you mean the same sort of thing, only you call it Beauty. I think there's a Power, all right! No one but a fool can be an Atheist; but I don't know if it is a Person. If it is a Person, he's a very

strong-minded Person, not like any of us three, and caring precious little what we think of him. He's not sentimental, or artistic, nor what I should call good. He does plenty of cruel, unjust, devilish things. He cares very little about individuals, and a lot about the race. He's ahead of us—tremendously ahead of us—and, for some reason or other, he can't do as he likes, though he makes tremendous efforts to do so. To be honest, I really think that there are two things at work, one wanting to rush on and one wanting to stop; and I haven't a notion which is going to win.

"Then, for myself, I know very little about that either. I know what I like and what I hate—and I change, though why I change, and what I am changing

into, I don't know; and to be frank, I don't much care.

"What am I out for then? Well, I want to be strong, I want to get what I like, and I want to be felt, as they say. I like work and I like power. I hate mean and small and dirty and grubby people. Why I like you two is because you are neither of you *that*, whatever you may be. I can't make people like me, and I don't want to; but I don't mean to be taken liberties with, and I mean to make people do what I tell them to do; I believe in the State—I mean that I think it's an arrangement for living sensibly together with as much liberty as possible. If people won't fall into line, they must be made to. And I haven't any use for idle, wasteful, stupid, fanciful

people. I've more use really, Harry, for you than for Roderick, because you can be used to keep order, and I'm not so sure that he can. But there is such a thing as leisure, and people have got to be amused—and Roderick can come in there, if he likes. If you ask me where my theory of what is right comes from, I say frankly that the world is in a mess, and my theory keeps it a little more straight—but it's only making the best out of rather a bad business. There!" Fred added, more moved than was his wont, "that's my idea, plainly, and perhaps coarsely put—but you two belong to me, and not I to you, and that's the truth. You have got to come into line, or take the consequences."

"That's really very fine!" said

Roderick, with a glance of admiration. "The tyrant's vein; and it suits you very well! I didn't know you had any of these ideas, and it's really very creditable. But now I am going to sum up, so there! I can't let this alone. You are both of you wrong, because your only idea is brute force. You have both got what you call convictions, and I am above both of you, because I have none. I believe in persuasion and beautiful example; Harry can only threaten people with a loss of happiness, and Fred can only bully them into playing his particular game. It's all force, and force is no go. There's nothing attractive about either of your theories, and attractiveness is the only power worth anything. Harry's is a starved affair, because he

believes in the inspired opinion of pious people. I believe in the inspiration of genius, but pious people are very rarely geniuses, though I grant you that Christ, and Isaiah, and the author of Job, and St. Paul, and St. Francis of Assisi, were all geniuses. But the thing has got into the hands of the respectable, and that's a dull affair; while as to Fred, he would like it to be in the hands of the strong people, and that's a much duller affair. Now I believe in a power that woos us—Christianity grows up out of it, and gets perverted into timidity—and politics grow up out of it, and get stiffened into prejudice. The fault of both is that they are stupid and hard. There's nothing fine or free about them. They are heavy-handed, they

are all rules—and what we want are instincts."

"Yes," said Norman, "I agree with that; it is instinct which we want to train—that is what civilisation does. You can't make a man into a good citizen by bringing him to heel by means of law, or even by trying to persuade him how sensible the law is; but you can educate his children properly, and they, or their children, will be better citizens by instinct. But it all has to be done scientifically; knowledge goes before and feeling follows after; the man of science studies the law of heredity, and takes advantage of it gradually to produce a better stock."

"Of course," said Roderick, "the man of science is useful enough in his

way—to do the dirty work—or call it the spade-work if you prefer; but don't you see that emotion must precede even that? the scientific man must want to make things better, before he takes the pains to find out how. It's a dim idea of beauty, I admit—but still it *is* an idea of beauty that haunts him. He is a muddled sort of idealist at bottom, though he does not know it. Why, take a thing like sanitation; the pleasure of the nose, and the dislike of bad smells, produced sanitation among the Romans long before they knew anything about bacteria; and Harry is in the same muddle too; he talks as if virtue had been invented by Christianity—but Christianity was evoked by the fact that people felt that goodness was

more beautiful than wickedness—and that is why I agree with him on the whole more than I do with you, because theology is at least an attempt to express emotions, while science is an attempt to disregard emotions."

"Oh, no," said Norman, "science does not disregard emotions—it analyses them, and shows that they are all only developments of very primitive things—the wish to live, the instinct of reproduction, and so on. But your mistake is to confuse artistic emotions with primary needs—artistic emotions are only produced by an artificial process. Everyone ought to work; and if you relieve a class from the need to work, and make them elaborately comfortable, then their superficial fancies begin to have an altogether unreal hold

over them—art is only a parasitic growth!"

"But it is there!" said Roderick, "and my emotions at the sight of an orchard on a sunny morning are just as real as my sensations if I have typhoid fever. That is where you are unscientific. You haven't any emotions yourself, and so you cannot conceive that any well-regulated people ought to have any either. You talk contemptuously of the imagination as a fantastic sort of thing—and that makes all your science a sham affair, because you only investigate the very few and dull phenomena you happen to have observed."

"It's just a question of relative importance," said Norman. "Of course all knowledge is not equally

valuable. There are a certain number of threads in that rug—but it is not worth anyone's while to count them. If the scientific man neglects imagination, it is because it obviously doesn't lead anywhere. When we have settled the things that do matter, then we will take up the less important phenomena. One finds fairy-stories, for instance, in every nation. It's a phenomenon, I grant you; but it isn't worth while to devote one's life to disproving the existence of fairies."

"I'll take you on at that," said Roderick. "Here's an argument which Harry might use. The parables in the Gospel, which are imaginary tales, have had more effect in producing orderly citizens than all the scientific books which were ever written. Harry, why

don't you speak up—come and help to knock out this wretched materialist."

Harry smiled rather dimly; then he got up, knocked out his pipe, and said: "I don't think I'll listen any longer; you won't mind if I go off to bed, will you? I don't want to spoil your sport, but it only confuses me. The whole thing seems simple enough to me—that God is leading the world to a knowledge of the truth—it sounds awfully solemn, that—but I mean it! I can't argue about these things, but I feel if I believed what either of you are saying, I should have to shut up shop altogether."

"Oh, we'll stop jawing," said Roderick; "don't go off like this!"

"No, *please* don't stop talking!" said Harry, "there isn't any sort of

reason to do so, if you are interested—but it makes me uncomfortable. I can't hold on. Good-night, and don't think me an ass, if you can help it."

He went out, and they heard him cross the orchard in silence, and the farm-door open and shut.

"What's the matter with Harry?" said Norman; "he isn't annoyed, is he?"

"Annoyed, no!" said Roderick, "but don't you see what has happened. You have no imagination, Fred—Don't you see that after that speech of his—which really was rather fine—he feels exactly as if he had been seen by Mrs. Hickes dancing a *pas seul* in his pyjamas on the lawn. I rather admire him for it—and it will restore his self-respect to go. He will feel

he has done the right thing, and I'm not sure that he hasn't. It is better than finding nothing inconveniently sacred, like you and me!"

"Well, he may be right," said Norman, "but I object to not facing things. I'll tell you quite plainly what I object to in both your theories. You both of you begin by wanting to be comfortable. You are like children —you want to be reassured, and told that the medicine is nice. You both of you start by wanting nature, whatever nature may be, to have a specifically benevolent intention to you; *you* think that Nature is sentimental, and Harry thinks that it is pious. It is neither; it is bent on doing something, evolving some sort of order; but it doesn't care a damn about

people's feelings. It is very merciless and very strong. It is fighting something—I don't know what—and we have to find out what it means, and to fight too. I admit that it is a nasty business that is going on; but I want to find out what *is* going on, and both you and Harry seem only bent on throwing eau-de-cologne about to hide the smell."

"And I think," said Roderick, "that you are so much interested in the bad smell that you can't think of anything else. I don't agree with you, or with Harry either, because you are both working on a preconceived plan. I am really more scientific than either of you, because I go deeper in, and try to tell you what is behind both of your plans. Harry calls his plan religion,

and he thinks that it is a lot of definite truths, which he calls dogmas, pumped into the world from outside—and the weakness of his case is that he can only say: 'You can't prove they are not true.' You say that it is all a matter of microscopes and chemicals; and the weakness of your case is that you say: 'You must prove that it is true'—and meanwhile you miss a lot of fine things which one knows to be true, but can't prove them. Harry isn't scientific enough, and you are too scientific; but I believe in the power of imagination to outrun facts a little—and that seems to me to be really the force which is pushing both you and Harry forwards, though you neither of you know it."

"I quite agree," said Norman, "that

your imagination is well in advance of the facts; and I think that it is all a waste of time. I believe that emotions are only a sort of ripple on the face of facts, and caused by the facts; and I want to put things in their place. I see a most almighty mess, and I want to get it straight. I don't see that your emotions help us. I agree with the man who said that a good sewer was an entirely holy thing, and I think it is worth all the music ever written, and all the pictures of angels that were ever painted. I want to make it possible for people to live rational and wholesome lives."

"Yes," said Roderick, "you worship the policeman and the sanitary inspector. But I don't want to substitute their figures in stained-glass windows

for the figures of saints and angels. I maintain that a sense of what is beautiful must precede any desire to make things wholesome; and I believe that both you and Harry put what you call knowledge before beauty, while I think that knowledge is only a sort of desire for beauty. It seems to me that neither of you want to interpret facts, but only to neglect the facts you don't happen to have noticed. I am every bit as scientific as you, and more so, in fact, because I don't deny your facts at all. I only think that the evidences of beauty are a more important set of facts than the evidences of ugliness; and I prefer to spend my time in studying what seems to me to be fine and splendid, because I think that is a quicker way to cure the nasty things

than to go nosing into cesspools. You want to bully people out of being dirty —I want to make them wish to be clean."

"And where does poor Harry come in?" said Norman.

"Oh, he wants to infect people with a false shame," said Roderick. "He is afraid both of beauty and ugliness alike. I would rather have one of his saints than one of your inspectors; but I think he is timid and conventional, while I think you are only strong and stupid."

Norman laughed. "We have got into the Palace of Truth at last," he said.

"It's your fault!" said Roderick. "You provoke me by being so cocksure, and by regarding me as an elegant

trifler. You see, I want to go to the heart of the thing, and to find the Tree of Life which I am sure is in the middle of the garden, while you are weeding out the thistles in the fields outside, and saying that you will believe in the Tree of Life when you see it. Hang you, I see it all the time, and it's full of fruit."

"Yes, I will be just," said Norman; "I think you do see something which I don't see, and I think that Harry does too; but I must go my own way to work, and I'll pull up thistles for the present. I'm sure they have no business to be there!"

"You're eating them, you dear old donkey!" said Roderick—"Look here, I can't go on; I'm suddenly weary of the heights of philosophy.

Let's get down again! We've had a splendid time here, haven't we? I wonder if we shall ever have as good a time again. Don't you know the awful feeling of the nice things slipping away —one can't keep them—sweet things have an end—I expect it would be very dull if they didn't!"

"No, I don't care about looking back," said Norman; "I want to get on, to work, to get my teeth into something. Of course, I have had a very good time here, and I'd like to say how much I have enjoyed it. You will smile at what I'm going to say, Roderick—I'm not often sentimental—but I believe I care for you much more than you care for me, in spite of all your emotions!"

"Oh, that's all right, dear boy," said

Roderick smiling, and more moved than he wished to show.

"Yes, you think so!" said Norman; "but I'll finish now. I think you will very likely go further than either Harry or me, and for the simple reason that you don't really care about either of us —you care for something behind us, of which we are just convenient symbols. Do you see what I mean? I care for one or two people in a definite and concrete way; but you will simply go on, caring for people because they seem what you call beautiful—and then they will become uninteresting, and you will care no more—you will just go on finding other people interesting and beautiful. I'm not finding fault, you know! It's your way—it isn't mine; but you miss something by it, which

I think I have got. You will go about charming and delighting people—that's all right; yet you don't like *people*—you like something you see in them—something they represent. But you don't care about humanity a bit; you don't care about causes. You are just looking for something you like. Now I do really want to combine, to co-operate, to put heads together and to mend matters. I'm even ready to give up what I prefer, if I can get at a net result so. Now, I don't want you to lose sight of that—I don't want you to do me an injustice; because I'm ashamed of caring so much that you should like me."

Norman stopped suddenly. Roderick leant forwards, propping his chin on his hands, and looked at him. "That's

magnificent!" he said; "why did you never say all this before? I didn't think you cared a hang for anyone! What an ass I am! I go about with my head in the air, and see nothing. You don't know what a fool you have made me feel! Well, never mind that now. I simply adore you! Is that enough?"

He slipped on his knees, and took Norman's hands for a moment in his own, then got up, laughing. "There!" he said, "I have taken my degree from you—a foolish ceremony, but symbolical."

They went out, after extinguishing the lamp, through the orchard; as they passed the violet-bed, Roderick picked a violet, and said, "Will you have one now?" Norman said nothing,

but took the violet, held Roderick's arm for a minute, and they went into the house.

Roderick lay long awake, revolving the little scene in his mind. "I've been an unmitigated ass!" he said to himself; "I can't forgive myself for not having seen."

VI

On the following morning—it was to be their last day at Sunset Farm—Knollys sought out Roderick, and said, "Look here, Roderick, about last night—I'm very sorry, but I really couldn't do otherwise. I felt—does this sound to you absurd?—as I should have felt if you had been talking about my mother, laughing at her, criticising her. I don't for a moment say you haven't the right to discuss these things, but I also know you wouldn't wish to force me to listen, if it upsets me. I can't answer you, and it all puzzles me. Of course if I were really more strong-minded I

shouldn't care a bit; but I can't hold on to things with my mind, only with my heart. I saw a sentence the other day in a book which describes exactly what I feel, that a Christian hasn't many things to do, only one thing to do, looking always to Christ—and when I look at Him through talk like yours and Fred's, it's like looking through a bit of uneven glass which distorts the features. You will forgive me, won't you?"

"Oh, it's all the other way," said Roderick. "I think if we had known exactly what you were feeling, we should never have gone on—we should never have begun. I'm not made that way—I don't think of anything as sacred—or rather the more that I believe a thing,

the more I like to hear it discussed, because it only strengthens my belief—or if it weakens my belief in it, then I think I am glad to have it weakened. Never mind! It's just one of those things which happen, and it's no use going back on it. I'm truly sorry!"

"Will you tell Fred?" said Knollys. "I don't think I can even speak to him about it, but I am sure you understand how I feel about it all."

"All right!" said Roderick. "But Fred understands quite well; and I think that in a way we both admire what you did."

They were very careful that day, the three young men, to let no jarring note intervene. The pleasant days together, and the sense of its being all over and

done with, touched them all with a sense of sadness—not unpleasant sadness. They sate for the last time in the pavilion, and spoke fitfully and quietly of ordinary things.

Roderick was early astir the next morning; he woke up at the singing of the birds, and could not sleep again. So he got up and rambled about. The place was still asleep, it seemed, and the early light of dawn came in with a deep enriching touch of colour on wall and tree. Roderick had the sense that it had been a very beautiful period, singularly free from all ugly elements; and the little interview with both his companions in those last hours had drawn them very close to himself. Was it true, he wondered, that he was

so light-minded and fickle in affection as Fred had said? He did not feel so, but he recognised a certain insight in Fred's remarks which he could not gainsay; and that morning he wanted to get the spirit of the place and the time into his mind, and to fix, if he could, his affection constantly on his friends. Such a time, he thought, ought to leave its mark, ought to bring him nearer to what he wished to become, to reassure him as he wished to be reassured. And he desired, too, not to feel that he took a narrow and prejudiced view—to understand Harry's belief and Fred's scepticism. He did not want to be excluded from anything which seemed to him either pure or strong.

Then came the farewells and the bustle of departure; and the last look at the little pavilion among the orchard boughs, and the old house under the trees, with all the homely sights about it, and the breath of summer air.

PART II

VII

All that was in the year of grace 1884. The trio of the pavilion took their degrees and left Oxford. Norman went to the bar, and did well. By the year 1912 he had a large practice; he had taken silk, and was considered certain to be made a judge. He was a widower now, and had one daughter whom he worshipped with a depth of devotion with which anyone seeing him in court, with his hard brisk manner and his rather pitiless grasp of mean issues, would have found it hard to credit him. Knollys was a country clergyman, and an Honorary Canon of

his Cathedral. He was happily married, and had three sons, as athletic and as simple-minded as their father. Roderick had become perhaps the most successful of the three. He had travelled for a time, then he had settled in London, had married a rich and distinguished wife, and he had become a prominent journalist and author. His leading articles were one of the strong points of the *Morning Telegraph;* he had written many and various books—novels, essays, criticisms and *belles lettres* generally, and his name was widely known.

The three friends had not seen very much of each other, though they met at intervals; and Roderick had two or three times travelled with Norman; but their circles did not touch; though

Norman and Roderick had insisted with friendly persuasiveness on being allowed the pleasure of helping to send Knollys' three boys to the old school and the old college.

This was a letter received by Norman in the spring of 1912:

LOWNDES SQUARE,
March 26, 1912.

MY DEAR FRED,—I have got an amusing bit of news for you. Who would have thought it? My wife and I have for the last ten years been fitfully planning to set up a little place in the country, instead of having the bother of taking a house somewhere year by year. Last summer I saw in an agent's catalogue the sale of the Helmdon estate, announced in lots.

You remember perhaps that Sunset Farm, where we spent that delightful month in the Long of '84, was part of it. Well, I bestirred myself, went down with my wife, and found the place practically unchanged, though dear old Hickes and his wife were long dead—I saw their graves in the churchyard. The old pavilion is just as it was; and my wife fell hopelessly in love with the place. We bought the farm, about a hundred acres; we have built a new farm-house, not far away; and we have done up and added to the old farm-house, very judiciously, I think. We have left all the old farm-buildings; and I have turned the pavilion into an outdoor study for myself. All this I have kept a profound secret; and now the place is

ready for habitation. I have set my heart on a little house-warming; and I want you and Harry to come down for a couple of nights. I have even prevailed on my wife to let us have it to ourselves for those first two nights. It really is a dramatic affair, that we three should meet again nearly thirty years later; and we will have a rare talk, and see how our old theories have stood the test of time. I don't myself feel a bit different. I am writing to old Harry too; but I don't suppose he is so much tied as you are. So please fix a date if you can in the next month, and we will get Harry to put up a prayer for Fair Weather. Please fall in with my whim, and if you can get down to luncheon on the Saturday so much the better. Meantime I am

petitioning our parson, who is a good fellow, to let Harry preach on Sunday in the church, and I shall like to hear what he has to say. You will have to bring Violet down some other time. I am always rather touched when I think why you gave her that name!—Ever yours,

RODERICK ARMITAGE.

Roderick wrote in very similar terms to Knollys, and all went well.

On the 24th of April, Roderick was pacing the station platform at Eynedon shortly after noon. He was an interesting and striking figure. He still moved lightly and gracefully. He wore his hair a little long, and had a carelessly-trimmed pointed beard and moustache, which showed a good many white hairs.

His complexion was as clear and fresh as ever, with a sanguine tinge, and his bright eyes undimmed. He was easily dressed in well-worn and well-fitting clothes, and had an air of distinction and success which were unmistakable.

The train drew up; Norman and Knollys descended. Norman was thin and wiry; he was bald now, and his clean-shaven lips and chin were firm and strong. His face was much lined, but he gave a sense of vigour, decision, and alertness. Knollys had retained the most youthful air of the three. He was hardly grizzled, and his tall form was active and well-knit. His expressive face, with the large grey eyes, looked serious, and there were patient lines on his updrawn brow. They certainly made a remarkable trio. Rode-

rick greeted them both with great fervour and affectionateness. A smart footman, assisted by Norman's youthful valet, saw to the luggage; and they were presently whirled off in Roderick's very luxurious car.

"I very nearly made you both bike!" said Roderick, laughing, "just to revive the atmosphere! But it doesn't do to be too dramatic. It's quite enough like a fairy tale as it is!"

They were soon at the house, and strolled round with Roderick before luncheon. He had really treated the whole thing very artistically. It was all elaborately simple; he had picked up old-fashioned local furniture, and there was a pleasant air of homely ease about the rooms. The pavilion itself had been hardly altered. "It's a prin-

ciple of mine," said Roderick, "to let things alone—I don't want self-conscious effects. I have had the paint just touched up, you see—but only so as to bring it back to what we remember; but it's going to be an ideal study—and I am really determined to keep it for myself for meditation and repose. We are never going to have any but real friends here—people who can be trusted to understand."

The three lunched together, took one of their familiar walks, and after dinner repaired to the pavilion. It looked very much the same, except that there was an ample fire of logs on the hearth, and that the room was lit by shaded candles instead of the old oil-lamp.

"Now!" said Roderick, "for once it is the time and the place and the loved

ones all together! Just fancy bringing this off! Whatever happens, I shall consider that fate has done well for us, to bring us together, so little damaged on the whole, after nearly thirty years! The ritual is all laid down for us to-night. I am going to have my say, and then Fred, and then Harry—and then Harry may leave the room if he must, but I hope he will see the talk out to-night without fear of disaster!"

Knollys smiled, a fine serene smile. "Yes," he said, "I don't think I need turn tail now. Dear me! how often have I thought since of how I marched away, and what an ass I felt—it seemed such an absurd demonstration!"

"I didn't quite understand it, I remember," said Norman, "but now—"

"Hush, hush!" said Roderick, "you shall have your turn. Well now," he said—looking round at the others—"here I am, and I have carried out my programme. I did exactly what I meant to do; I wandered about, I saw and heard and felt everything—and it was very good! I came home, and I found a market for my wares. I found people perfectly willing to listen to anything I had to say, and I have been saying the same things ever since in different ways. I married, and my wife spoils me to her heart's content and mine. I wish we had had children, but I don't know that I should have been at all a good father, and I expect it's better so. And I am rich, and I don't pretend not to like that, because it means liberty, and I can do exactly what I like best,

without giving it a thought; and for each and all of these things I am abundantly grateful, and most of all for absolutely perfect health. I don't deny that all the things which people envy have been given me, and I have enjoyed them, and tried to share them too. And in a way—I won't pretend otherwise—I'm a personage. I can practically know anyone I like, and people listen to me, and treat me with respect; and all that is undeniably jolly. And yet I am prepared—I think I may say this, though one never knows—to meet calamities if they come. I haven't had them, I haven't suffered. I have had the wine and the oil and the perfume as well; but I believe I could do without them and not be unhappy. Even now, I am conscious of just shading off

a little into the past. The young men don't believe in me, and I expect I have had my say. As soon as I get an Honorary Degree, I shall feel that my day is over.

"But I think just as I did. I went out to look for beauty and I have found it everywhere; I have preached it for all I am worth; but if you ask me frankly what effect I have had, I do not think I have had any effect at all. I have made a good many people more comfortable, and I get hosts of letters which tell me so. But I do not think I have persuaded anyone to believe in my doctrines, except the people who believed them already. I have been a court-preacher, so to speak, and not a prophet. And to speak candidly, I think I have been too comfortable.

If I had suffered, or agonised, or lost anything, or sacrificed anything—and if I had found, in spite of that, that I could still hold on to beauty, then I could have done something. But I have found myself at every turn, and not lost myself.

"And yet I believe that I am right still, and that beauty can be worshipped; but I haven't taken enough out of myself! I have always been agreed with and applauded—but I'm not spoilt, because I am quite aware of my failure. If I had stuck to some one big piece of artistic work, put my whole soul into it and wrestled with it, it would have been different; but I have always kept holiday, and sailed before the breeze. And yet I do not see how it could have been otherwise;

beauty is a real, strong, noble principle; but it goes down deeper than I have been able to go; and I haven't penetrated to the inner soul of it—I have never been inside the Holy Place, or seen the mysteries celebrated. And yet I can see the real thing in the work of other men—Mind you, I have done my work conscientiously, but that isn't enough; it's something much more fierce and sad that is wanted. And so I have been a sort of sign-post, pointing somewhere, and never going there myself; and I think I would give all my success for a touch of the divine fire. Art is as serious as death for some people; and it walks as old Tennyson says:

'With Death and Morning on the silver horns.'

But I have been like the maid in the same poem,

'Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height;
What pleasure lives in height, (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?'

"So you see where I am, old friends—very much where I was as a boy, living in the pleasure of the eye, and perhaps in the pride of life, and never quite touching the inner thing at all. But I'm happy—I dare to say that—though I have not gone out at the further door of experience, which leads, I fancy, on to bleak hills."

His musical voice stopped suddenly, and he sate gazing at the fire.

"There," he said, "that is my story

—and the wonder to me is that I seem to be yet in the first chapter! Now, Fred, off you go!"

Norman sate upright in his chair, with a half smile, holding his cigar between his fingers.

"Well," he said, "I will do my best; but my school of eloquence is a dry one, you know—*Nisi Prius!* The time has seemed very short to me; and I doubt if I have done more than knock the bottom out of most of my old theories. I'm not prepared to advance a theory. I have done a lot of work, much of it very useless, I think, some of it necessary. I have enjoyed it—yes, I have enjoyed it; but I am not sure that I haven't enjoyed it most because I haven't had time to think. It's a hard and tough

business, life, and it has caught me like a stream and whirled me away, and I have just had to swim. I have made money, but I have had very little good out of it. I have had hardly any leisure, and I expect to die in harness. I have been a sort of servant, I think, obeying orders, and just keeping a room swept—and I suppose that it has to be swept. I have not made friends—I am not curious about people ; they do not seem to me to have, as a rule, any clear ideas about anything. I had my one chance of looking inside life, when I married. I can't say very much about that, because in losing my wife, I lost the one person who did a little interpret life for me ; but she died nearly twenty years ago, and I

have got used to loneliness; then Violet began to grow up, and I begin to see something again in life that is worth having. I don't know what it is, but in loving her, I do seem to get near to what Roderick called the inner soul. I think—I can't say it clearly—that there is something moving behind it all which loves, or tries to love; but there are barriers between, and it cannot come as near as it would. When my wife died, I felt, for a time, that she was utterly gone; not only lost to me, but vanished into nothingness. I don't feel that now. I think there is one last thing behind it all—the power of going on caring. I don't think that any other part of me will last, but I believe that this one part

will. No, I'm not even sure of that; but it's the nearest I can get to what is called faith—that it all goes on. I have been a good deal hammered by life, but I am not afraid of it, and I do not think very much of it. It isn't beautiful, it isn't noble—but it has got just that one ray of light in it—and I could say farewell to the rest of it without a sigh—but then," he added, smiling, "I suppose my sense of enjoyment is rather atrophied. Art, I fear, bores me profoundly—it seems to me a kind of mild pottering. And religion, as it presents itself to me, seems like a disputed claim to a peerage, depending on records which don't exist. But there's something there, there's something! Then, too,—this is an awful

confession, and it wouldn't improve my chances of legal promotion if it were repeated—but I don't much believe in work! It maintains what is called one's self-respect, but I'm not sure that it is worth very much, when all is said and done. I think I have been rather extinguished by work, but, like Roderick, I don't see how it could have been otherwise; yet I say plainly that I do believe in love; at least I think that the secret is hidden there, if anywhere; and when I come to die, I believe that that is what Roderick calls the further door . . . and I have a feeling that the hills beyond are not wholly bleak." He stopped for an instant, and then reverting to his driest manner, he said with

a smile: "There, m'lud, that's my case!"

Roderick sate lost in thought, looking at the fire. Knollys smiled, a very beautiful and quiet smile; there was a long silence.

VIII

"Now," said Roderick, bestirring himself at last, "it's your turn, Harry! I very much want to hear what you have to say!"

"Ah!" said Knollys, "I don't know if I shall find the words—it's all deeply interesting to me—I can't say how interesting! It's wonderful to be here again together; and yet I was rather afraid of coming, you know. You two fellows are such swells, and have gone sailing ahead, while I have been in a very quiet backwater. I thought, coming here, that I should feel that—that without meaning to do so, you would each of you make me

realise how homely and feeble my life had been. But, do you know,"—he turned from one to the other, smiling, as he spoke—"I don't feel it at all; because the things which you two have found—I don't know how to say this without seeming critical—don't seem to have been important, somehow, even to yourselves! Now that sounds as if I were attempting to triumph over you, and making a pedestal out of my own want of success, calling it unworldliness or other-worldliness in order to glorify it. I thought I should probably envy you your successes—I think I did a little envy them—but you don't seem to set any store by them yourselves; the most you have said for them is that they have been conveniences; and you

are neither of you looking at them, it seems to me, but through them, at something else, which you have not yet found.

"Well, it seems to me very odd that I should be lecturing two famous men; but I will try to say what I think. It seems to me that the whole point of life is to get inside life, to see it from the inside. I have got something further to say about that from the point of view of religion, but I will leave that for the present. Still, from what you have said, I can't help feeling that neither of you has exactly got inside life. You, Roderick, seem to me hardly to have changed at all; it's amazing to me how little you have changed—but in the old days you

always appeared to me to be holding up your ideas of art as a kind of shield against life, and you seem to have gone on doing that all these years, and life has never got inside your guard. I admire it, in a way—but I still don't think you are wholly to be congratulated.

"You, Fred, seem to me to have got at life in one thing—in your marriage, and, may I say plainly, in the loss of your wife. But even you have done this in spite of life, and not by means of it. Your work has been a fortress to you—of course you have seen life—I expect you know more about men and women than I do—but you have only seen it—you haven't lived it. At least, I don't feel sure that you

have; and I don't think you feel sure either.

"Well, you may ask, what has my life been, that I should speak so? and I answer, it has been life. I have had a home, I have had to live among very simple people, I have seen them in health and happiness, and I have seen them in pain and perplexity—I have had to help them along as well as I could. Then I have been poor; I have had to contrive, I have had to feel that I could not do things I should like to do—and I have had times, I am ashamed to say, when I have felt utterly flattened out and disheartened—it has seemed such a very dingy business! But it has been real life, because it has often not been at all interesting,

indeed as dull as ditch-water; while neither of you have ever known what it is to be dull; but dullness is just the one enemy which most people have to fight! When I read books and stories—I haven't much time for reading—I often find myself wondering why it has all got to be made so interesting and exciting; it isn't in the least like what happens. If life were exciting, it might be hard, but it wouldn't be humiliating; but it isn't exciting—the days, weeks, months, when literally nothing happens—those are the times, I believe, when the real battle has to be fought; and it's all the worse, because it doesn't seem a battle at all; it is like just struggling with mud, what the *Pilgrim's Progress* calls the Slough of

Despond; there's no way out, there's nothing alive about you, within or without—there are the services and the school and the visitings and the household cares; no one seems to want any help, and you haven't anything to give them if they did. There's a naughty boy to speak to who won't see that what he has done is wrong, and says that he is not the worst; or there's an old woman dying, who suffers, and can't think of anything but her pain; and all the hopes and beliefs which appear so glorious and so obvious to oneself are simply nothing to either of them.

"But then religion comes in—and I do not expect you to sympathise with this. I went from my town curacy,

where it was interesting enough, to help my father who was old and ill; and then he died, and they all wanted me to take the living; and though I did not want to, there were overwhelming reasons; and there I have been ever since. Then I married, and the children came.

"All the while, I was there for a certain purpose. I came away from my theological college full of notions; I picked them up like a pigeon picking up peas. Well, many of those notions did not seem to fit the case—they did not seem tools for me to work with; and though I do not deny their importance for a moment—Church tradition, Church history, development, Biblical criticism—yet I began to see that they

did not really affect the problem, because they were outside life and not inside it. I think my creed is a much simpler one now. What it seems I have to bring home to my people is just that God exists, and that He has a purpose full of love to every soul; and best of all, that the Eternal Son Himself came down to live in the world He loves, to redeem it, to save it; and that His Holy Spirit still moves in the world, and can enter into the hearts of those who believe, by faith, by prayer, and by the Sacrament which Christ ordained — old well-known phrases, all of them, but hiding the secret of all life and change. And so I came to see that religion was just a life and a hope, and that Christ is

with us still, if we can be simple enough to invite Him to enter the soul; and then at last one sees that that is life—to know Him, not to know about Him—and that in any place one may not only bear witness to Him, but—may I say—introduce Him, make Him known. I am content to do that—indeed there is nothing else that I can do; and the meaning of life—I dare to say this—has become clear to me; it is beauty, Roderick, and, Fred, it is love; but it is something more than that—it is force and faith; and till one knows and feels that, the meaning of life is not clear." He stopped for an instant, and then he said: "I'm not trying to convert you, as it is called; people have to find their own way to that

knowledge, and it seems so far from being either splendid or attractive—but it is what is meant by losing oneself to find oneself; and the secret lies there."

There followed a short silence; and then Roderick said: "Ah, old boy, you have outshot us both! Yes, you have indeed been to a far country, and seen things which I have not seen! I should have argued with you in old days, but I'm not inclined to do that now. I don't doubt what you have said, and it seems to me beautiful—and something more than beautiful—it's real enough! But I'm going to ask you two questions. If I grant, for the moment, that what you say is true, does it mean, do you think, that one

who like myself is living among sights and sounds and ideas which seem to leave no room for anything else, they are so full of life and beauty, does it mean, I ask, that I am but wasting my time in an ante-chamber—that I shall have to turn my back on all this? Because the difficulty seems to me that your theory, big and vigorous as it is, has a tendency to starve life. It's fine, it's austere—but it isn't rich! If you have to distinguish, let me say, between good and evil, do you think that all these exquisite qualities, which I see so acutely, are of the nature of evil — wandering fires to distract one from the path? Isn't that the mistake of Puritanism, that it shuts the eyes to what is after all the

work of what I will call God's hand ? "

Knollys bent forward. " No, indeed," he said, " I'm not a Puritan. I will go further and say that the saint, as I understand a saint, above all things *enjoys*. He is the person who enjoys life most, because he has not to be always selecting. Shall I dare to say that the saint is a sort of artist in morals—the fineness and the ugliness of it is for ever present to him. Don't suppose that I am calling myself a saint—that is quite beyond me—but he is much more interested in life than other men, because the values are always present, everywhere, in the stupidest man, the most foolish woman, the smallest child. No one can escape

from handling life, and making choices, and using the will; but you artists seem to sweep so much of it away as common rubbish. I think your senses are too strong for you, too insistent—so that you don't see the moral quality in life."

"That's a good answer!" said Fred. "Yes, it is," said Roderick, "but I have a further question. If I grant that the saint has really a richer view of life—and I see that he may be more in touch with it than the artist—what is God about, if I may use such a phrase, by making all the finer developments of humanity, the intellect, the observation, the humour, the artistic sense, such that they cloud the simple truth? He seems to be making man

on the one hand more complex and critical; and every step in that direction makes it harder for a man to submit himself to the sort of belief you have outlined. If the truth is so utterly important and so unmistakable, it should be easier and not harder for the more finely-bred man to apprehend it?"

"Ah!" said Knollys, "there I admit you are beyond me. I quite see that the greatest human gifts, and the things which dazzle men's minds most, do seem to make it harder for them to perceive the truth, as I hold it. But I fall back on a democratic idea! Side by side with this fineness of development of which you speak, which is confined to a very small and fortunate

minority, the vast mass of humanity are beginning to perceive, to ask questions, to assert their rights, to claim liberty. Men are more and more equalised, and the sort of leisure and opportunities which you have enjoyed seem likely to become more and more impossible. I am not sure," he said, with a smile, "that you cannot be neglected! I do not believe, I fear, in the intellectual side of religion, and still less in the æsthetic side, but what I believe is growing up in the world is the sense that to deal with life at all, and life, I mean, lived on very common lines, a real sense of its significance is needed—and though I agree that the sense of beauty is a little bit of experience, I feel that experience is a bigger

thing than that, and that it has got to be dealt with spiritually—that is, with a faith that God has a plan from which the dullest and coarsest are not shut out; and that in the sense of His Fatherhood and man's brotherhood the solution must be found. Religion simply means that to me—Baptism, which is the symbol of the cleansing of evil, is the sign of Fatherhood. The Sacrament, which is the symbol of unity of life, is the sign of Brotherhood. I do not believe that there is much else which matters. Records and tradition just testify to continuity; it's the moral force in the world which is God; and it grows . . . it grows!"

"You are a good advocate!" said Fred, smiling. "But I have a further

question to put, which you will see is born out of my experience. What if your life has been such—and mine has been such—as to make you, instead of desiring brotherhood with men, only eager to separate yourself from a type which seems so full of the basest selfishness, vile trickery, the desire to plunder and exploit the world? That is what the law-court teaches you—to mistrust everyone, to believe everything possible of anyone; and if that falls to bits, the Fatherhood of God goes with it—it makes one feel—I am not speaking profanely—as if God were indifferent, careless, ineffective."

"Well," said Knollys, smiling, "are you not perhaps in the position of the doctor who is tempted to believe that

all the world is ill? That is what I mean by not seeing life from the inside —you only see the scum and foam of it. I myself believe more in human nature every year I live—I see it sweet and humble and kind, and full of infinite possibilities. It isn't always obvious, I grant. People can't express what is in them; every sort of prejudice and ugly habit and selfishness get encrusted round the soul. But again and again I have come at last to the innermost essence — and I can only say that I have seen it to be, as a rule, very child-like and innocent and true—not far from the Kingdom of God. It's only a fancy, no doubt," he added, "but I have sometimes felt that in losing our body, with all its inheritances and fears

and habits, we might find that what is left is infinitely clear and guileless and loving. You see I have watched many people die—and at the last flicker, when the world is already almost out of sight, I have generally seen something very pure awake. The last look is almost always a look of love—and if that is left, does anything else matter ? "

" I think not," said Fred very gravely. " Yes, I am glad to have heard that said."

" Well," said Roderick, rising and smiling at his friends, " the play is almost played out, I think. It's new to me, Harry, to have all this clearly said—it's the sort of thing that I have missed hearing ! But I will say this, that you make me feel both stupid and

unperceptive ; you have given me much to think about. I'm incurably frivolous, I know—but I seem to have come to the edge of something to-night, and to be looking over. A great thing seems to have escaped me—and it somehow appears that Fred has more idea of it than I have ; but it won't be lost on me, it won't indeed ! "

IX

They all went to church the following morning. There was a larger congregation than usual, as it was known that Knollys was to preach. Roderick found the whole thing very delightful. It was a fine old solid church, not much restored; the flooring was uneven, the old pews leaned at pleasant angles; the walls showed stains of weather, and there was an odd brightly-painted Jacobean monument in the chancel, on which the in-streaming sun fell very quaintly. Roderick liked the holiday air of the congregation, and the loud artless music which was sung. He admired the look of Knollys in his

surplice and hood, and the expression of his face, very still and gentle, and as if self, he thought, had somehow passed out of it.

Knollys preached, very simply indeed, without any notes, from a text from Job—"*That which I see not, teach Thou me.*" It was a sermon not addressed, as Roderick thought it would have been, to himself and Norman, but directly to the congregation; and there was something truly pastoral in the way in which Knollys faced the people, looking hither and thither, without any self-consciousness at all. He said that one of the greatest difficulties with which Christians had to deal was the tolerance with which they regarded their own characters, which

was quite different from the way in which they saw and marked the faults of others. "*We make*," he said, "*every allowance for ourselves, because we know our own difficulties and temptations.*" But the result of this, he said, was that many of our faults quite escaped us. "*We are quick-tempered, and excuse it by saying that we say frankly what we think; or we are sullen, and pretend to ourselves that we restrain our outbreaks of temper; and so it comes about that most other people know what our faults are more truly than we know ourselves; while we take refuge in thinking that we are well-intentioned people, and that God will not be hard on us.*

"*And indeed, dear friends*," he said,

"God will not be hard on us; He lets us go our own way, perhaps for many years, because He means us to find the way for ourselves to His Heart; He does not want a timid obedience, though He would rather have that than a timid disobedience; but what He really desires is a trustful love. Our troubles and sufferings—we cannot do without them—are really invitations to us to trust Him; and you may take my word for it, that I have known many people who have found their way to Him through trouble, but hardly any who have found the way through prosperity! And the one and only test of our nearness to God is the way in which we feel about other people. We are all moving together, a glad and a sorrowful company, to a life the great-

ness of which we can hardly even guess. As long as we are just busied with our own designs, anxious to get as much happiness as we can, using other people to increase our happiness, we are hardly looking to God at all; and the best reason for wanting to get rid of our faults is that they are the things which keep other people away from us, make them fear us and avoid us. For the moment we begin to care about other people, we are different. There is no better way of making a friend than by allowing another to do us a kindness; and there is no pleasure like that of being kind to those we love.

"*But then some of you may say: 'I am not naturally kind; I do not naturally like other people; and as for*

loving God, I do not even know how to begin. He is so far away, He allows such dreadful things to happen, He has so many rules and commandments which we want to break, how can we know Him, how can we please Him?'"

He stopped, and looked down the church with a smile.

"*Yes,*" he said, "*that is the old difficulty and the great difficulty—that He demands our love, and will not show His face to us, that we may love Him, as we certainly should, if we could but behold Him. But He is there—we none of us doubt that; and whatever our lives may be, He is trying to show us in a hundred ways, that He needs our love; He cannot do without that, and He waits till we can give it, till we have leisure to turn from*

all the little cares which so fill our minds and hearts, and to find Him behind them all and above them all. Look there," he said, pointing to the east window of the church, "*what do you see there? Christ upon the Cross, dying alone and in failure. That is the answer! That is how God comes to meet us, to show that there is no human suffering which He would not bear. It is there that the worst that man can do, and the best that God can do, join hands.*"

He was silent for a moment, with an uncontrollable emotion. Then he resumed: "'*That which I see not, teach Thou me.*' *The King in His beauty, the land that is very far off, that is what we desire to see, and what we shall see, the moment we are worthy of it. Our doubts,*

our fears, our troubles are all of them simply proofs that we are looking for something beyond them, and that we cannot find God in them.

"So that is my simple message to you to-day. It is nearly thirty years since I have been in this church. I was just beginning then, as a young man, in much pride and carelessness, to see that I could not do without God; and, praised be His Name, I have been finding my way to Him ever since; and if I could but tell you the glory and joy of that, you would not doubt my words. I am not telling you to do anything difficult, anything which the youngest child cannot do; and if you once begin to do it, you will find all the things that vex and distress and alarm you, begin quietly to vanish away;

and the love of God will rise in your hearts, as the flower blooms in the spring. Only practise trusting Him, putting your hand in His, as a child on a dark night puts its hand in the hand of its mother; live in His presence, recognise His love! Do not be afraid that He will not make allowances for you, or that He will try your strength overmuch. The journey may be long and weary, but He will bring you home to Himself at last."

It was simple enough, but Roderick felt a strange peacefulness shed abroad by the words, delivered as they were with a directness of conviction which made an intense appeal. There was no shadow of doubt that Knollys was speaking out of a real depth of experi-

ence, the quality of which Roderick felt himself quite unable to criticise.

He walked home with Norman; Knollys had said that they were not to wait for him, as he was going to the Vicarage.

"That was very wonderful, I think," said Roderick lightly. "Dear old boy, how splendid he looked! Now there's a life behind that," he added, "which is quite different from what I expected of Harry! I thought I should find myself disagreeing with everything that he said, and quarrelling with all his assumptions—but he did not make any assumptions at all! It's a fine handling of life that! It has the true artistic quality!"

"He's got a case," said Norman

rather grimly; "he has certainly got a case—that is the sort of thing that would tell with a jury! Come," he added, "that's a base criticism! I must honestly admit that I haven't been in a church for years; but if I could hear that sort of religion preached, I would go. Don't you see, Roderick," he added, "that this is the real thing—the thing we all want! You say he made no assumptions—I admit they did not sound like assumptions—but he made one all through, and that was his idea of God. There's the eternal difficulty. But I must add this. Most parsons used to seem to me in the old days to preach as if they were trying to persuade themselves that what they said was true. But Harry has seen

something—he has got hold of something which you and I have missed. It isn't a question of proofs and arguments. It may not be exactly what he thinks it to be; and I daresay that if we discussed it all, he would say a dozen things I should think were very bad evidence. But he has touched some force or other—there's no excuse for doubting that. It's as clear to me that his love of God is as real a thing as—well, as my love for Violet. It's as definite a thing as that; and I simply feel, for once in my life, that I have no business to call it imagination. A man can't make himself believe a thing like that. I don't doubt that there is something which he sees, as clearly as you see what you call beauty; and

I'm somewhat bewildered, because it isn't visible to me. I don't pretend I am going to look for it—my habits and views are too much fixed for that—but, good Heavens, suppose that it, or something like it, is really there all the time!"

"It isn't inconceivable to me," said Roderick; "it's an artistic perception of moral values, I believe. I don't deny it has interested me—and it was certainly beautiful!"

X

THEY sate again in the pavilion that evening. They had strolled and talked all the afternoon, and all three felt a little tired. It had been a curious strain, after all, the reunion!

As they sate smoking, Roderick said: "Harry, we won't discuss your sermon —though I intended to; but Fred and I have spoken about it, and we are interested, and more than interested."

"I fear I was very dull!" said Harry. "I seemed unable to think of anything, and just said what lies at the bottom of my mind, you know. I

can't prove these things; I just seem to know them."

"Yes," said Fred, "I felt that; and you must let me say one thing, Harry. I didn't expect to agree with you, and I am not sure that I do agree with you—but I felt like a blind man listening to a description of colours from a man with eyes. My difficulty is simply this—why, if that is the one fact in the world—and it obviously is to you—are we not all shown it, not necessarily clearly, but beyond the power of doubt?"

"Ah!" said Harry, "I can't answer that. It seems to me as clear as that I am alive. You want proofs, you think perhaps that I make assumptions. But so do you! We each of us assume that

the other exists. We can't prove it; and yet nothing which you call proof can begin at all till we have both of us made that assumption. It is true that I go further and assume God. God and the soul—I am not sure of anything else; but I can't show you what I think I see; and I have a feeling too that you see it, though you call it by a different name—and then both you and Roderick have been very busy, and that makes it harder, I suppose."

"Well," said Roderick, "we will not talk any more about that now. I am tired of weighing and valuing things! Let us just be glad that something has brought us three together again in the dear old place! I am sure that fact

alone ought to prove anything and everything. It's strange and beautiful, and I will go so far as to say that it seems affectionate! That has got to be enough. I have a very real sense of gratitude about me to-night, and I am willing to allow that I have been handsomely used. My cup is as full as it can hold; and even if it is dashed to pieces in my hands, I would still be thankful for my invitation to the feast of life, and say that I had been royally entertained."

"And I too," said Norman, "I don't complain. I have had a fine time, and I know it!"

"That's good," said Knollys, smiling. "But perhaps I don't think it all so wonderful as you two! You see, I

expect wonders to happen; that's my trade! and will you think it very tiresome if I quote a text, and say that we shall see greater things than these!"

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